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ABSTRACT

Established to provide leadership in educational research and development in the United States, the National Institute of Education (NIE) encourages the participation of minorities and women in its research activities. NIE increased representation of minorities and women in its work force between 1973-79. Minority representation rose from 36% to 42%, while women represent 54% of its work force. The seventeen laboratories and centers conducting educational research projects have some equal employment problems--underrepresentation of minorities and women in professional, management, and governing board positions and overrepresentation of them in clerical and support positions. Long-term agreements containing affirmative action requirements and development of special goals and timetables should help remedy these problems. NIE has undertaken a number of projects to increase participation of minorities and women in its activities, including the unsolicited proposal program, Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Program, Minorities' and Women's Program, and black college initiatives program. These efforts have met with some success, but have generally been inadequately funded and staffed. (YLB)

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BY THE U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Report To The Honorable Shirley Chisholm House Of Representatives

The National Institute Of Education Should Further Increase Minority And Female Participation In Its Activities

The National Institute of Education has improved its equal employment opportunity profile during the last 2 years and is encouraging more minority- and female-oriented educational research and development with its sponsors.

The Institute's employment profile generally has a good representation of minorities and women. However, the representation of minorities and women in the work forces of Institute-funded organizations has not been good, and few institutions operated by minorities and women received Institute grants and contracts.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Human Resources
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B-200543

The Honorable Shirley Chisholm
House of Representatives

Dear Ms. Chisholm:

This report discusses minority and female participation in National Institute of Education activities and in activities it funds. We have suggested ways to improve equal opportunity efforts related to such activities. Our review was made pursuant to your January 24, 1980, request.

At your request, we did not take the additional time needed to obtain written agency comments. The matters covered in the report were discussed with Institute officials, however, and their comments are included in the report where appropriate.

We are sending a copy of this report today to the Institute's Acting Director.

Sincerely yours,

Gregory J. Ahart
Director

JAN 26 1981

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
REPORT TO THE HONORABLE
SHIRLEY CHISHOLM,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SHOULD FURTHER INCREASE MINORITY AND FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN ITS ACTIVITIES

D I G E S T

The National Institute of Education was established to provide leadership in educational research and development in the United States. In keeping with the Congress' declaration that everyone have an equal opportunity to receive an education without regard to their race, sex, color, religion, national origin, or social class, the Institute encourages the participation of minorities and women in its research activities--both in its work force and in projects and activities it funds.

THE INSTITUTE'S MINORITY AND FEMALE PROFILE

The Institute has increased the representation of minorities and women in its work force. Between 1973 and 1979, although its total employment declined, its minority representation rose from 36 to about 42 percent, while women continued to represent about 54 percent of its work force. Of the 38 senior management positions at the Institute on January 31, 1980, 11 were filled by minorities and 13 by women. (See p. 5.)

IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN LABORATORY AND CENTER EEO PERFORMANCE

The Institute funds 17 laboratories and centers to conduct educational research projects. These entities have some equal employment opportunity problems.

Tear Sheet. Upon removal, the report cover date should be noted hereon.

--Underrepresentation of minorities and women in professional, management, and governing board positions.

--Overrepresentation of minorities and women in clerical and support positions. (See p. 11.)

Current Institute initiatives, such as long-term agreements with the laboratories and centers that contain affirmative action requirements, should help remedy these problems. (See p. 14.) The Institute should also develop, with the help of the laboratories and centers, specific equal employment opportunity goals and timetables for each of these 17 facilities. It must also monitor progress toward these goals and enforce the equal employment opportunity requirements, as appropriate. (See p. 16.)

INSTITUTE OUTREACH EFFORTS TO MINORITIES AND WOMEN SHOULD BE IMPROVED

The Institute has undertaken a number of projects to increase the participation of minorities and women in its activities, including

--the unsolicited proposal program,

--the Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Program,

--the Minorities' and Women's Program, and

--the black college initiatives program. (See p. 23.)

These efforts are designed to increase awareness in Institute programs and provide greater opportunities for minorities and women to participate. Although these efforts have met with some success, they have generally been inadequately funded and staffed. Additional resources should be provided so that these efforts can be effectively implemented. (See p. 32.)

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	affirmative action plan
EEO	equal employment opportunity
GS	general schedule
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
MWP	Minorities' and Women's Program
NCER	National Council on Educational Research
NIE	National Institute of Education
R&D	research and development
SADBUP	Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Program

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The National Institute of Education (NIE) was established in 1972 by the General Education Provisions Act, as amended (20 U.S.C. 1221). The act's provisions generally give NIE responsibility for providing leadership in educational research and development (R&D) in the United States.

Specifically, as a result of the Education Amendments of 1976 (Public Law 94-482), NIE was to concentrate its resources on the following priority R&D needs:

--Improving student achievement in the basic educational skills, including reading and mathematics.

--Overcoming problems of finance, productivity, and management in educational institutions.

--Improving schools' ability to meet their responsibilities to provide equal educational opportunities for students who are socially, economically, or educationally disadvantaged.

--Preparing youths and adults for entering and progressing in careers.

--Improving dissemination of the results of, and knowledge gained from, educational R&D, including assistance to educational agencies and institutions in applying such results and knowledge.

NIE translated this congressional mandate into a twofold mission statement: to promote educational equity 1/ and to improve the quality of educational practice.

HOW NIE OPERATES

The Institute is headed by a Director, appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, and a 15-member

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1/Educational equity, as used in this report, refers to (1) minority- and female-oriented educational research and (2) educational research conducted or carried out by minority and female researchers.

policymaking body, the National Council on Educational Research (NCER). 1/ (See app. I.) NIE has organized its work around three broad program areas: Teaching and Learning, Educational Policy and Organization, and Dissemination and Improvement of Practice.

NIE was appropriated about $527 million during fiscal years 1976-81. Its appropriations ranged from $69.9 million in 1976 to an estimated $94.0 million for 1981.

Ninety percent of the Institute's funds are expended through grants and contracts. Through grants NIE seeks studies initiated by the educational community within research areas suggested by its broad purposes (e.g., improvement of reading and teaching skills). Directed studies of more specific topics (e.g., problems of junior high schools and minimum competency testing) are accomplished through contracts. During fiscal year 1981, NIE expects to award about 700 grants and contracts.

Award recipients include researchers in regional, State, and local education agencies, postsecondary institutions and research centers, private nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and individuals. In addition to awarding grants and contracts, NIE provides educational research support for a network of 17 regional R&D laboratories and centers.

The eight laboratories and nine centers were established by the Office of Education in the mid-1960s. Prior to their establishment, educational R&D was supported through a variety of separate, small-scale individual projects. With the laboratories and centers, educational R&D was able to be addressed on a much broader scale, as programs with interrelated activities were able to be studied over long periods of time. Such approaches to education problems encouraged the participation of researchers from a variety of disciplines. The laboratories are responsible for (1) helping to identify R&D needs in specified geographical regions, (2) helping to address high-priority needs through appropriate R&D activities, and (3) coordinating other R&D efforts in the regions.

1/The Director of NIE reports to the Assistant Secretary for Research and Improvement, Department of Education. Before May 4, 1980, NIE was part of the Education Division in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW).

The centers are responsible for exercising leadership in problem areas of national importance and conducting high-quality, large-scale research in selected educational areas. Responsibility for funding the laboratories and centers was transferred to NIE when it was created. Generally, the laboratories and centers are funded through grants. The Congress mandated NIE to support the laboratories and centers and has earmarked large parts of NIE's budget for that purpose. The laboratories and centers receive 30 to 40 percent of NIE's program funds each year.

NIE AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The first paragraph of NIE's authorizing legislation states:

> "The Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide to every person an equal opportunity to receive an education of high quality regardless of his race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or social class * * *"

NIE policies, such as 75-04, which encourages the participation of minorities and women in research, and 77-01, which addresses instructional improvement, emphasize the equity aspect of NIE's congressional mandate.

Concerns have been expressed about NIE's effectiveness and impact in the area of equal opportunity. These concerns include both the equal opportunity implications of NIE-sponsored research and equal employment opportunity (EEO) within NIE and its affiliated organizations.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

As requested by Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, we examined

--the extent of minority and female participation in NIE-sponsored activities,

--the status of NIE support to small and black colleges and other outreach efforts,

--the extent of minority and female representation in NIE and in the laboratories and centers that receive NIE funds,

--the role of NIE's EEO office,

--the minority and female profile of NIE's policymaking positions,

--NIE's use of Small Business Administration set-aside contracts, and

--the criteria for minority and female participation in NIE's unsolicited proposal program.

We gathered and analyzed data available at NIE's Washington, D.C., headquarters. We also

--interviewed more than 30 NIE officials, including the Acting Director, Deputy Director, Associate Directors, and many middle- and upper-level managers, and

--observed several laboratory, center, and NCER meetings.

CHAPTER 2

NIE'S MINORITY AND FEMALE PROFILE

NIE has improved its EEO profile. Between 1973 and 1979, NIE's total work force decreased from 367 to 329, but its representation of minorities increased from 36.2 to 42.2 percent. Female employment for the same period remained at about 54 percent.

OVERVIEW OF NIE STAFFING

To determine how well minorities and women were represented in NIE's work force, we obtained its classification of personnel by secretarial/clerical and professional/technical position groups and by top and senior management positions. (See app. II.)

As of January 31, 1980, 23.4 percent of NIE's 329 employees were in secretarial/clerical positions, and 76.6 percent were in professional/technical positions. Of the 252 professional/technical positions, 99 (39.3 percent) were excepted appointments (see p. 6) or in the Senior Executive Service.

The top six NIE management positions were occupied by white males and one minority female. Three of these positions were filled on an acting basis. Of the 38 senior management positions at NIE on January 31, 1980, 11 were filled by minorities and 13 by women.

Female and minority representation in NIE's work force

Generally most segments of NIE's minority and female profile appeared to represent, or be overrepresentative of, the general U.S. population. NIE's most serious representation problems appeared to be in the concentration of minorities and females in low-paying clerical/support positions.

Nearly half of NIE's minority and female employees were in clerical/support positions. As of January 31, 1980, 84.4 percent of NIE's total secretarial/clerical positions were filled by minorities. In addition, 46.8 percent of all NIE minority employees are in such jobs.

As noted earlier, minority representation in NIE has increased to 42.2 percent of the total work force. This representation varies significantly among major program areas at NIE. For example, the Educational Policy and Organization Program currently has nine positions at general schedule (GS) grades 13 and above, but it employs no career status minorities at those levels.

Excepted appointments

Section 405(e)(5) of the General Education Provisions Act authorizes the NIE Director to appoint, for terms not to exceed 3 years, such technical or professional employees as he deems necessary. NIE has used this excepted appointing authority primarily to fill middle- and senior-level research positions, in accordance with Office of Personnel Management policies.

NIE's progress toward increasing minority and female representation for professional positions was greatest for positions filled under the excepted appointing authority. To illustrate, whereas minority representation in all professional/technical positions increased from 24 to 29 percent between 1977 and 1979, minority appointments to excepted category positions increased from 10 to 28 percent. In addition, female representation in excepted positions increased from 30 to 38 percent during the same period.

Upward mobility

NIE's upward mobility program is intended to address the high concentration of minorities and females in clerical/support positions. This two-tiered program is composed of (1) a Technician Intern Program for GS-5-7 paraprofessional positions and (2) a Professional Intern Program for GS-7-11 professional positions. The upward mobility program is designed to supplement employee qualifications, to develop specialized expertise and enhance professional growth, to provide a custom-tailored training plan, and to be augmented, as appropriate, with rotational job assignments throughout NIE's three program and one administrative divisions. Although not operational as of August 1980, the program is expected to allow up to 21 months of training for Technician Intern Program and 18 months for Professional Intern Program participants. The Department of Education has not determined whether this will be an NIE program, or part of a department-level effort.

In our view, the upward mobility training program is a step in the right direction.

CONCLUSION

NIE's EEO profile has improved since 1973. Its minority and female work force is generally representative, or in some cases overrepresentative, of the general U.S. population. NIE recognizes minorities and women are overrepresented in clerical/support positions, and it has established an upward mobility program to address this condition.

CHAPTER 3

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED IN LABORATORY AND CENTER EEO AND EQUITY ACTIVITIES

Although NIE has displayed a longstanding concern for equity and EEO in its laboratory and center activities, problems still exist, as illustrated by the

--underrepresentation of minorities and women in professional, management, and governing board positions and

--overrepresentation of minorities and women in clerical and support positions.

Current NIE initiatives, most notably the establishment of long-term agreements with the laboratories and centers that include conditional affirmative action requirements for continued funding, may help remedy these problems. However, NIE must aggressively employ these initiatives to show significant improvements in its laboratories' and centers' EEO profiles.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The centers and laboratories supported by NIE were established before NIE was created. Various educational R&D institutions were formed in the early 1960s under the auspices of the Office of Education. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Federal management of the educational research effort consisted chiefly of project proposal submissions followed by panel reviews to determine which proposals would receive support. However, the Office of Education and its advisory bodies became concerned because this approach was fragmentary and lacked cohesiveness.

In 1972, management responsibility for the laboratories and centers was shifted to the newly created NIE. NIE continued the Office of Education practice of sponsoring individual projects. An apparent side effect of this practice was that the laboratories, in particular, began operating as job shops (e.g., worked on individual projects with no overall continuity). Educational R&D experts view this past mode of operation as a major factor in lessening the stability of the laboratories and centers and in weakening their sense of institutional or common mission.

In 1975, after an NCER-commissioned study, the Congress directed NIE to establish "special institutional relationships" with the existing 17 laboratories and centers. Thus, NIE began supporting the laboratories and centers as institutions instead of a collection of individual projects.

In August 1978, NIE distributed for comment draft procedures for the long-term relationships with the laboratories and centers. After review and discussion with interested parties, NIE issued its administrative policy and procedures on January 15, 1979.

NIE's objective in entering into the long-term relationships (generally 5-year renewable agreements) with the laboratories and centers is to provide the support, stability, and assistance needed to (1) help meet the educational R&D needs of specified regions of the country and (2) provide research leadership in educational problem areas of national importance.

Under this arrangement, the laboratories and centers bear primary responsibility for determining program priorities consistent with NIE's mission. NIE is responsible for working with the laboratories' and centers' governing bodies and staffs to (1) help make them strong and representative of the institutions' constituents and (2) develop plans for meeting priorities. It is important to note that these governing bodies are responsible for determining the work priorities in a laboratory's region or in a center's problem area.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUITY ISSUES AT THE LABORATORIES AND CENTERS

Basically two types of equal opportunity issues are associated with the laboratories and centers. The first is whether the research conducted has a minority or female focus, referred to as the equity content of the research. The second relates to EEO and the race and sex makeup of the staff and advisory bodies.

Equity in research undertaken

NIE initiated many measures and devoted considerable effort to ensure that equity is a consideration in most, if not all, research undertaken. Some indications are:

--NIE's 1978 reorganization created a planning office, with significant planning and oversight responsibilities for increasing the effectiveness of equity in research programs.

--In November 1979, NIE filled a longstanding vacancy for the Equity Policy Review and Analysis Office position in the central planning office. This person is responsible for providing leadership, technical assistance, and advice to the Director regarding progress toward NIE's equity mandate.

--In March 1980, NIE issued its new policy on disseminating research results. If adopted by NCER, the policy will provide, in part, increased equity in the access and use of educational research among all interested parties, particularly those, such as minority groups, for whom means of access and use of knowledge to improve educational practices have been limited.

--Several NIE directives and memorandums have been issued over the years pointing out the need for careful attention to the race, sex, and ethnic composition of grant and contract review groups that evaluate proposed NIE-sponsored research.

--NIE's proposal evaluation criteria emphasize such factors as the importance of research in helping to serve poor and minority populations.

--In 1977, NCER adopted a curriculum development policy which states that (1) the central purpose of all NIE-sponsored efforts for improving instructional programs is to equalize educational opportunity and (2) NIE will not support full-scale curriculum development unless it includes some aspect of equal opportunity.

While these factors are indicators of NIE's commitment to equity, we did not address the issue of the equity impact of the research undertaken by NIE because it was outside the scope of the work requested.

EEO activities at the laboratories and centers

Laboratory and center EEO deficiencies have been a longstanding problem in NIE. In a 1978 report to the NIE

Director, the congressionally mandated Panel for the Review of Laboratory and Center Operations found EEO deficiencies in nearly every laboratory and center. EEO deficiencies typically noted were:

--Underrepresentation of minorities and women in professional, management, and governing board positions.

--Overrepresentation of minorities and especially women in clerical and support positions.

In general, the panel's findings were so widespread that it considered forming a subcommittee to more comprehensively investigate EEO and formulate a recommendation for NIE to find ways to ensure that the laboratories and centers have adequate representation of minorities, women, and practitioners (such as teachers) on their boards and senior staffs. A second report, issued by the panel after site visits to each laboratory and center, confirmed the EEO deficiencies.

The magnitude of the EEO problems varied between facilities, but NIE officials stated that the centers presented the greater problem, partly because their university affiliations often posed tenure-related limitations in hiring faculty-level staff. In addition, NIE staff said that both laboratory and center officials attributed these problems to the fact that

--many universities and their affiliated centers are located in communities that have small minority populations upon which to draw;

--the salaries offered do not attract highly qualified, highly sought minorities; and

--university faculties tend to be relatively stable, affording few opportunities for new hires.

LONG-TERM AGREEMENTS MAY IMPROVE EEO AND EQUITY POSTURE

As noted, beginning in December 1979, NIE entered into long-term (5-year) agreements with 15 of the 17 laboratories and centers. 1/ The agreements were the result of extensive

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1/Two centers were limited to 1-year funding for a "strengthening" period to improve past deficiencies.

review and negotiation between NIE, the laboratories and centers, the Panel for the Review of Laboratory and Center Operations, and other interested parties. Among other things, general and special requirements regarding affirmative action and training for women and minorities were built into the agreements as conditions for continued NIE funding.

In addition, as long as NIE receives sufficient funding, the agreements provide that a laboratory's or center's annual funding will be at least 80 percent of its planning target. However, support could be more than that target (up to 120 percent) depending on the results of NIE performance reviews (including EEO reviews) and the availability of funds.

These agreements required each facility to demonstrate leadership in, and a strong commitment to, equal education and employment opportunity in its philosophy, management, and practice. In addition, each institution's funding proposal was required to include an affirmative action plan (AAP), indicating specific steps the institution was taking and would take to achieve adequate representation of women and minorities on its staff.

We reviewed the affirmative action segment of research proposals the laboratories and centers submitted to NIE in 1979. Our review showed that generally the plans

--did not address specific measures being taken to improve the representation of minorities and women and

--lacked specific goals and timetables against which to judge the progress made.

Following are some of the deficiencies we found in the 16 laboratory and center AAPs submitted:

--Eleven contained no specific employment goals for minorities and women.

--Twelve contained no timetables for achieving goals.

--Six contained no action steps, statistics, goals, timetables, or work force analyses.

--Ten contained no specific actions undertaken to assure EEO.

--Fourteen were deficient in one or more critical elements of an acceptable AAP (i.e., goals, timetables, work force analyses, employment statistics, etc.).

In addition, one center did not submit an AAP. This is one of the two centers that did not receive a long-term funding agreement.

Moreover, to illustrate some of the representation problems evident in the AAPs that contained sufficient data, we noted that:

--One center (in California) had no blacks on its administrative staff, senior research staff, or faculty associates staff.

--One laboratory (in the East) had no minorities in top or middle management.

--One center (in California) had only 3 minorities on its 73-member research staff, including consultants.

NIE officials responsible for monitoring the laboratories and centers said they recognized that the centers had long-standing EEO problems. However, NIE did not address the problems on the basis of specific, quantified hiring goals and time frames, but rather on the basis of its judgment of what constituted "adequate progress." One monitor said that approaching center EEO problems on a strictly quantitative basis was difficult because of the nature of their staffing mechanisms. To illustrate, most centers have a relatively small administrative core group and add most research staff as research proposals are funded. To the extent that a faculty member obtains a grant for his/her proposal, he/she becomes a member of the center for the duration of the project. In addition, this staff member typically retains other university-related duties, such as teaching, while working at the center part time.

While we recognize these problems, we also note that some laboratories and centers have made progress in overcoming these obstacles through internships; increased links with special interest groups, such as the National Urban League; broadened relationships with black colleges and universities; and visiting scholar programs. For example, one laboratory cited

for minority underrepresentation in the 1978 panel study has improved its profile in part through a recruitment program with black colleges.

Will the long-term agreements be effective?

It was too early to assess the effectiveness of the long-term agreements in promoting laboratory and center EEO improvements, since most had been in effect for only a few months at the time of our review. However, NIE officials said they have no reluctance in using the agreements as the means of promoting EEO by either reducing laboratory or center funding or terminating funding if a laboratory or center refuses to take corrective action. One official said that the two centers that do not have long-term agreements were cited for EEO deficiencies. However, this official added that the primary reason NIE did not grant them long-term agreements was because of program deficiencies, not EEO deficiencies.

NIE needs to incorporate in its long-term agreements more specificity regarding minimum standards for the representation of women and minorities on the laboratories' and centers' staffs. For instance, NIE's current procedures for awarding long-term agreements do not appear to be a factor in awarding grants to the laboratories and centers.

This is illustrated by the fact that NIE granted long-term agreements to some institutions that have more serious EEO deficiencies than those that have been denied long-term status.

For example, one center that was not offered a long-term agreement has some research underway headed by women and minorities, while a laboratory and another center, both of which received long-term agreements, had no minorities heading research projects.

The long-term agreements provide for NIE to conduct rigorous onsite reviews in the 3rd year of their 5-year term and to determine whether the agreements should be renewed. NIE said that it will soon specify the criteria it will use for these reviews and that the criteria will include standards for the representation of minorities and women on the laboratories' and centers' staffs.

THE ROLE OF THE EEO OFFICE

In 1978, after lengthy review and consultation, NIE reorganized its administrative structure. As part of that reorganization, the EEO office was placed in NIE's Office of the Director.

The office is responsible for planning, coordinating, and evaluating EEO programs within NIE (such as the upward mobility program) and assisting its contractors and grantees in meeting the requirements of cognizant Federal EEO laws and regulations.

In 1979 HEW broadened the scope of the EEO office. It placed NIE's minority business administrative function within the EEO office and enlarged it to include all NIE small and disadvantaged business related responsibilities.

Procedural uncertainties for some EEO matters

The EEO office has encountered some problems in accomplishing its mission, as it has had limited participation and leadership in EEO matters relating to laboratory and center management.

The EEO office chief said that, although the office has some responsibility for ensuring EEO compliance by the laboratories and centers, the manner in which these responsibilities were to be carried out had not been fully developed. For example, as of August 1980, NIE had not finalized the standards and procedures for assessing the adequacy of minority and female representation in the laboratories and centers.

In addition, the chief pointed out that her participation on internal grants review committees is limited to an advisory role, and she was not aware of the final disposition of some of her recommendations about the makeup of proposed outside review panels. She said that these instances were few, but she did not receive any feedback on her input.

CONCLUSIONS

NIE has taken steps to correct some EEO deficiencies in laboratory and center staffing. The new long-term agreements,

with their integral EEO and equity conditions and flexible funding provisions, appear to provide the basis for continued progress.

However, we believe that the effectiveness of long-term agreements in improving the representation of minorities and women at the laboratories and centers will be limited unless NIE:

--Ensures that AAPs specify employment goals, timetables, and proposed action steps.

--In conjunction with the laboratories and centers, establishes specific criteria for determining "adequate progress" at each institution for reaching its EEO goals.

--Through its EEO office, plays a larger role in helping the laboratories and centers establish and achieve their EEO objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the NIE Director:

--Develop, in conjunction with the laboratories and centers, specific goals and timetables for the adequate representation of minorities and women at each institution.

--Monitor laboratory and center progress in achieving these goals.

--Aggressively enforce the EEO and equity conditions of the long-term agreements.

--Direct the EEO office to ensure that the laboratories and centers are aware of and exercise their EEO responsibilities.

CHAPTER 4

THE UNSOLICITED PROPOSAL PROGRAM HAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED MINORITY AND WOMEN GRANT RECIPIENTS

Most NIE grants and contracts were awarded through grants competition or requests for proposals. These methods of funding research historically have resulted in limited funding opportunities for women, minorities, and others. In 1977, partly in response to that problem, NIE established an unsolicited proposal program aimed at receiving proposals from (1) minority researchers, women researchers, and researchers from institutions that primarily serve women and minorities, (2) teachers, administrators, and others from local schools and other educational institutions, and (3) scholars from disciplines not normally involved in educational research.

However, the unsolicited proposal program has not significantly increased the number of proposals received, and projects funded, from minorities and women. NIE needs to change the administration of this program to improve its effectiveness.

THE UNSOLICITED PROPOSAL PROGRAM

NIE established the unsolicited proposal program in an attempt to increase target group (e.g., minorities and women) participation primarily through direct mailings to black colleges, local school districts, and other institutions that primarily serve minorities and women. These mailings are intended to publicize the program and to generate potential applicant interest in obtaining NIE funds.

In 1976, NCER urged NIE to make available 3 to 5 percent of its budget to support unsolicited proposals. For fiscal year 1980, NIE allocated $3,069,000 (about 4 percent of its budget) for the program.

NIE normally funds unsolicited proposals between $10,000 and $100,000, usually for only 1 year, in the hope of expanding the range of topics and researchers supported through smaller awards. Awards are made in June and December of each year.

Eligible applicants include colleges; universities; State departments of education; local educational agencies; other public or private agencies, organizations, groups, or individuals; or any combination of these. Most awards are grants, but contracts may be awarded to profitmaking institutions.

NIE supports educational R&D, and it will not fund projects that

--are primarily service in nature,

--seek primarily operational funds,

--offer routine analyses of data, or

--closely resemble a pending competitive solicitation.

Proposal review and criteria

After an initial NIE staff screening for eligibility, proposals are independently reviewed in competition with others by field readers. These non-NIE experts, who are qualified in relevant areas of educational research and practice, evaluate the proposals through a weighted score (maximum 100 points) based on the following criteria:

--Significance of the proposed research for American education, particularly such problems as the failure to serve poor and minority populations (35 points maximum).

--Quality of the proposed research project (35 points maximum).

--Qualifications of the principal investigator and other professional personnel (20 points maximum).

--Adequacy of the facilities and arrangements available to the investigator(s) to conduct the proposed study (5 points maximum).

--Reasonableness of the budget for the work to be done and the anticipated results (5 points maximum).

Proposals receiving a score of 80 points or more are reviewed by other non-NIE experts who are convened as a panel.

The resulting rankings are then forwarded to the NIE Director as a two-tiered set of recommendations for funding. The highly recommended group (called TAB A proposals) are funded out of the unsolicited proposals program budget. The recommended group (called TAB B proposals) are funded to the extent that funds can be found in other NIE program areas.

UNSOLICITED PROPOSAL PROGRAM NOT MEETING ITS OBJECTIVES

From November 1, 1978, to June 30, 1979, NIE funded 23 proposals through the unsolicited proposal program. Women researchers received four (17 percent) and minority researchers received three (13 percent) of the awards.

Several factors appear to limit the opportunity for minorities and women to participate in the unsolicited proposal program. They include:

--The evaluation criteria, which are similar to other "regular" grant criteria.

--The review process, which relies heavily on evaluations by non-NIE experts, such as field readers.

--The lack of specific minority and female goals for the program.

--The limited number of minority and female applications to the program.

Evaluation criteria

NIE's evaluation criteria for the unsolicited proposal program are similar to those used to evaluate other grant announcements. Since the unsolicited program is intended to expand the range of topics and persons supported, an alternative approach to evaluating such proposals would be to give more weight to evaluation elements that meet the program's objectives and address minorities and women. The unsolicited proposal evaluation criteria should emphasize different considerations than those emphasized for "regular" grants.

The review process

NIE's review of unsolicited proposals relies heavily on evaluations by readers--experts whom NIE pays to review and

evaluate proposals. Athough this approach is laudable in its objectivity, it reduces NIE's control in determining which proposals are selected. Although the number of readers appear representative (the last group of readers was 57 percent minority and 57 percent female), relatively few minority and female grants have been awarded. This is partly related to the limited number of applications received from minorities and women, but nevertheless, few minority and female submissions are ultimately recommended for funding. Therefore, the field readers (and perhaps the review panels) may not be fully aware of the program objectives while evaluating these proposals.

Lack of goals for awards to minorities and women

One of NIE's objectives is to increase minority and female participation in educational research. However, NIE has not established goals for increasing the number of awards to minorities and women under the unsolicited proposal program.

As a result, assessing the program's effectiveness is difficult. NIE officials said that to date 45 projects have been funded, of which 5 were proposed by minorities. However, the absence of goals makes it difficult to assess whether the program should be termed successful.

Minorities and women are not applying

The unsolicited proposal program has had limited impact partly because relatively few women and minorities have sent in unsolicited proposals. Most applicants between November 1, 1978, and June 30, 1979, were male (187 of 281, or 66 percent). NIE was not sure of the number of minority applicants because it does not classify applicants by race, but NIE officials estimated on the basis of name recognition that fewer than 25 minority applications were received.

NIE officials recognize that, because the program gave limited support to minorities and women in the past, some persons in these target groups may have adopted a pessimistic attitude. To help increase the number of minorities applying for grants, NIE has sent program brochures and materials to about 100 historically black colleges to advertise the program.

NIE ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE PROGRAM

Recognizing the program's shortcomings, NIE officials are considering modifying the evaluation criteria and the review process. In addition, they are considering setting aside certain proposal awards or award funds for minorities. However, they have indicated their reluctance to stop using non-NIE expert evaluations. They prefer to rely more heavily on the NIE Director's discretion in selecting grantees while awaiting development of new NIE regulations for all of its grant awards.

In addition, NIE officials said that, to improve the program, the following new strategies will be implemented in the current round of awards:

--More clearly explaining program purposes to external reviewers and program staff.

--Making special efforts to assist people whose proposals were rejected, especially those from targeted groups, by giving them more extensive comments on the inadequacies of their proposals.

--Requesting NIE program groups, in preparing award recommendations for the Director, to include descriptions of quality projects that were not highly ranked.

CONCLUSIONS

The unsolicited proposal program has not significantly increased the number of NIE-funded, minority- and women-managed projects. The program needs to be changed if it is to achieve its objectives. Program effectiveness should be improved by recent NIE actions to

--modify the evaluation criteria,

--modify the review process, and

--try to increase the number of qualified minority and women applicants.

We believe that there should be specific goals for increasing the number of minorities and women in the unsolicited proposal program. The absence of such goals contributes to

a general lack of target direction for the program and difficulty in measuring progress toward its objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the NIE Director finalize the actions proposed to modify the evaluation criteria, modify the evaluation process, and try to increase the number of qualified minority and women applicants to the unsolicited proposal program.

Also, we recommend that the Director establish goals for the number of minorities and women to participate in the program.

CHAPTER 5

NIE OUTREACH EFFORTS TO MINORITIES AND WOMEN SHOULD BE IMPROVED

NIE's primary minority and female outreach efforts consist of:

--The Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Program (SADBUP).

--The Minorities' and Women's Program (MWP).

--A black colleges' initiative.

--The unsolicited proposal program.

These efforts are intended to increase (1) awareness of NIE programs, (2) opportunities for minorities and women to participate in them, and (3) their effectiveness. The unsolicited proposal program was discussed in chapter 4. The other programs, discussed in this chapter, have had varying degrees of success in increasing minority and female participation in NIE activities. In addition, in some cases, NIE's financial support to these programs has decreased from prior-year levels.

THE SMALL AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS UTILIZATION PROGRAM

NIE established SADBUP in 1979 in response to Public Law 95-507, which amended the Small Business Act of 1958 (15 U.S.C. 631). This law mandated the establishment of small and disadvantaged business utilization offices in all Federal agencies that had a procurement function. This program, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (previously HEW), replaced a former minority business program managed by the Department of Commerce.

SADBUP, an expansion of the previous program, emphasizes procurement awards to minorities, women, and small businesses. The program is designed to combine the functional management of minority, women, and small business procurements and to promote department-level guidance and technical assistance to persons managing these programs in various agencies.

NIE's program is located in the EEO office, which is part of the Office or the Director.

NIE awards to small and disadvantaged firms

NIE has made awards to minority contractors since its inception in 1972. The table below presents the total amounts of NIE awards to small and minority firms since 1976.

Fiscal year	Amount (millions)
1976	$2.30
1977	3.70
1978	3.80
1979	4.65
1980	a/3.30

a/Estimated.

As shown by the table, NIE awards to small and minority firms from 1976 consistently increased until 1980. NIE said that its fiscal year 1980 appropriation is about $4 million less than its fiscal year 1979 appropriation, which necessitated reductions in a number of its programs, including its disadvantaged program.

The 8(a) program

The 8(a) set-aside program (15 U.S.C. 637(a)) provides for a percentage of all Federal contracts to be allocated (or set-aside) for minority firms certified as eligible by the Small Business Administration. Department of Health and Human Services regulations, which NIE used to administer its activities under this program, included women-owned firms. Contract awards are made on a noncompetitive basis to qualified firms as a subcontract under a contract between the contracting agency (e.g., NIE) and the Small Business Administration.

NIE's use of the 8(a) mechanism has met with criticisms over the years. For example:

--An internal NIE study found that many 8(a) firms were concerned about a perceived indifference and negative attitude of NIE program staff toward doing business with them.

--The program has apparently been used primarily for service procurements, such as contracts for managing and supporting conferences, rather than R&D procurements.

While these criticisms have some merit, NIE has initiated actions to overcome these problems.

To illustrate, in December 1979 NIE hired a part-time minority business coordinator to oversee its minority procurement efforts. This position was later converted to full-time status and is now the NIE Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Specialist. The program specialist said that one of his tasks is to act as a facilitator for the minority contractor community to emphasize the use of minority and female contractors to NIE's program staff. He added that he is attempting to sensitize program staff to routinely pursue opportunities to use minority and female firms, and not to view this approach as a novelty.

Moreover, NIE has established a $100,000 incentive fund available to those program managers who exceed their annual 8(a) goals. This fund can be used where a program staff has identified opportunities for 8(a) awards in excess of their targeted procurement goals.

In addition, the percentage of NIE 8(a) funds going to R&D contractors has exceeded the fiscal year 1978 level in each of the past 2 years, as shown in the following table.

8(a) Awards for Fiscal Years 1978-80

Fiscal year	Service procurement awards	R&D awards	R&D percentage
1978	$1,600,000	$2,500,000	36
1979	150,000	4,500,000	96
1980 (note a)	500,000	1,600,000	69

a/Information for 1980 based on NIE estimates.

Examples of R&D awards to 8(a) program firms include:

--A study of national metric needs.

--A design for assessing MWP.

--A study of college and university planning management.

Factors that may hamper program effectiveness

Although NIE has initiated steps to improve its use of 8(a) firms and minority and women contractors, some potential problems remain.

For example, the program specialist believes that increasing minority and female contracting activity will be difficult unless he can spend a lot of time in the minority contracting community promoting NIE opportunities and familiarizing himself with contractors' capabilities. According to him, this outreach function is critical if the program is to succeed. However, he said that his other duties and lack of staff make it impossible for him to devote enough time to these activities. He is also responsible for coordinating the Handicapped Employment Program, processing EEO complaints, and monitoring all small and disadvantaged business efforts.

The program specialist added that, because SADBUP is a new function, some procedures and requirements have not been finalized. For example, with the creation of the Department of Education, there is some uncertainty about SADBUP management. He explained that, since SADBUP was an HEW-managed program, and NIE is no longer part of HEW, it is not clear what impact this may have on NIE's SADBUP activities.

THE MINORITIES' AND WOMEN'S PROGRAM

The Experimental Program for Opportunities in Advanced Study and Research in Education--better known as NIE's Minorities' and Women's Program--was established in 1976. The program is to strengthen the quality, relevance, and credibility of research on problems in education by involving more minorities and women in NIE's educational R&D process.

MWP historically has had a postdoctoral focus. But in a 1979 assessment, NIE identified significant gaps in the status of developing institutions and indicated the need for advanced training in educational R&D for junior researchers.

The need was based on the assessment's observations that (1) proposals submitted for NIE program grants by developing institutions were of poor quality and few in number, (2) NIE received many requests from these institutions for assistance in initiating research activities, and (3) there was an overwhelming response to an MWP-sponsored summer workshop that provided training on how to participate in an NIE R&D program, from the conceptualization of a research idea to managing a project.

MWP outreach efforts to increase the participation of smaller colleges in NIE's programs have included the following:

--NIE representative participation in meetings that focus on smaller colleges.

--Presentations at colleges, such as Tuskegee Institute, Hampton Institute, Fayetteville State University, Bowie State College, Virginia State University, Morgan State University, and Howard University.

--Faculty participation from these institutions in review conferences, project directors' conferences, and other MWP activities.

In addition, NIE-funded projects to larger institutions have affected several smaller colleges through subcontracts and subgrants. The following is a sample of some smaller colleges that have participated in NIE programs through grants or contracts awarded to larger institutions.

Institutions funded	Smaller institutions participating
University of Georgia	Fort Valley and Albany State Colleges
Atlanta University	Clark, Morehouse, and Spellman Colleges
Purdue University	Miles College
Virginia State University	Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College
Michigan State University	Morgan State University
Howard University	21 black colleges
Virginia Union University	Miles and Benedict Colleges
	Virginia State University, Murray State College, and St. Augustine's College
Hampton University	Norfolk State and St. Paul Universities
University of Michigan	Hampton Institute
Radcliffe College	Fisk University

NIE has said that MWP has been "very successful" in increasing minority and female participation in educational R&D, and our analysis of its target group contact supports that view. To illustrate, in fiscal years 1978-79, about 738 researchers participated in MWP-sponsored research projects. Of the participants, about 70 percent were minorities.

Our review of MWP focused on (1) the impact of funding reductions and (2) black colleges funded.

NIE funding for MWP

The following table shows NIE's budget for program activities compared to funds budgeted and expended for MWP for fiscal years 1978-80.

Description	Fiscal year 1978	1979	1980 (note a)	Total
	(millions)			
MWP:				
Expenditures	$ 2.10	$ 4.30	$ 3.00	$ 9.40
Budget	2.70	3.30	3.40	9.40
NIE budget for program activities	76.38	83.09	77.11	256.57

a/Estimated by NIE.

As shown in the table, MWP's total expenditures were the same as those budgeted for the 3-year period. Despite this, MWP underwent an expenditure reduction between 1979 and 1980. The reduction in MWP funds was the second highest percentage reduction of any NIE program in 1980.

NIE's Acting Director told us that the fiscal year 1980 reduction occurred because several projects originally intended for fiscal year 1978 funding were delayed. These projects were funded in early fiscal year 1979, causing an artificial "bulge" in 1979 funding. He added that the budget reduction did not indicate a reduction in NIE's commitment to the program or its objectives.

The MWP director said that the fiscal year 1980 budget reduction limited new-start activity. However, she said that, if funding for the program is not reduced below the projected fiscal year 1981 level, the program could adequately meet its current obligations and provide about $1.2 million for much-needed new initiatives.

As an example, she noted that MWP is establishing an R&D seminar program that will address the deficiencies found in many proposals received from minorities and women.

We believe that MWP is a constructive program that appears to be producing good outreach results. With adequate and stable funding, the program should continue to increase participation by minorities and women in NIE's educational R&D program.

NIE funding for black colleges

At NIE, funding to black and developing institutions has been limited and only recently was given priority. Most NIE black college funding has historically come from MWP and has not been an agencywide effort as NIE envisioned. The first NIE awards to developing institutions were made in fiscal year 1976. NIE program funding for fiscal year 1980 is about $430,000, with awards going to five developing institutions.

For 1973-79, NIE made seven awards to black colleges. (See app. III.) Since 1974, NIE has received 77 proposals from 30 black colleges.

The seven awards to black colleges have been to schools offering at least a master's program; there were no awards to schools offering only baccalaureate degrees. NIE said that colleges without a postgraduate program are limited in their ability to compete for research funds by their lack of resources.

NIE said that, although it funds about 8.3 percent of the proposals received, black colleges are funded at a slightly higher rate--9 percent. Although the rate of which awards were made was similar, the amounts awarded to black colleges were very small, as shown in appendix IV for fiscal years 1977-80. For example, in fiscal year 1979, NIE awarded $30.5 million to colleges and universities (38 percent of its R&D funding); however, black colleges received only $630,682 (0.78 percent of NIE's R&D funds).

Although MWP was established as simply one part of NIE's total minority participation effort, it represents the bulk of NIE's black college funding support. For example:

--In 1977 (the first year of MWP activity), $56,451 was awarded to black colleges.

--In 1978, $192,734 was awarded to three black colleges with MWP providing $175,000 (90.8 percent).

--In 1979, $630,682 was awarded to 11 black colleges, with MWP providing about $310,000 (49.2 percent).

The MWP director said that, for fiscal year 1980, MWP will again carry the largest portion of black college support.

NIE'S BLACK COLLEGE INITIATIVES

NIE has undertaken numerous projects designed to assist black colleges and increase their participation in NIE-sponsored activities.

The following outlines some communication and dissemination efforts that NIE has initiated to assist black colleges.

--NIE compiled the addresses of all black colleges and placed them on its central mailing list. Furthermore, it went to each of the colleges and asked them to give NIE the names of persons responsible for research and Federal Government activities at their institutions, so that grant announcements and requests for proposals can be routed quickly to interested faculty members. The response to NIE's inquiry exceeded 50 percent.

--NIE officials continue to maintain contact with a number of black colleges. The team is planning a program for fiscal year 1981 that will focus on desegregation in higher education. The staff member planning the program has already met with and interviewed many representatives from black colleges.

As another example of NIE's concern for black college participation, we were told that members of a studies team are responsible for reporting regularly to the black colleges' initiative staff on NIE's progress in involving black colleges and their faculty and administrators in the agency's activities.

In addition, various NIE officials and staff have met with individuals from organizations representing black colleges to discuss NIE's programs. These organizations include the Moton Institute, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, the Association of Fund Raising Officers in Negro Colleges, the Office for the Advancement of Public Negro Colleges, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, the United Negro College Fund, the Urban League, the National Alliance of Black School Educators, and the National Association for the Advancement of Black Americans in Vocational Education. NIE has made presentations of its activities at national conferences of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, meetings of the National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education and Black Colleges and Universities, and other major meetings of associations listed above.

Finally, in 1979, an NIE studies team initiated a black colleges seminar project directed at "Current and Emerging Roles for Black Colleges and Universities." The basic motivation for the project was NIE's recognition that desegregation and emerging financial and enrollment pressures were leading black colleges to greater consideration of their future roles in American higher education.

Planning for the seminar began in the summer of 1978, before January 1979, when the President directed all Federal departments and agencies to help black colleges fulfill their unique mission in higher education. Therefore, NIE considers the seminar project responsive to the directive, even though it has other objectives for NIE programs.

NIE solicited the views of a variety of black educators, administrators, representatives of special interest groups, economists, etc., to help determine a seminar strategy, and it selected 14 persons to participate in invitational seminars. The persons selected were offered small grants ($2,000 to $2,500) to write papers on selected topics and present them at a three-part seminar. (The project was funded for about $80,000.)

At the final meeting, held in June 1980, final manuscripts were discussed. It is hoped that this effort will identify future areas in which NIE can contribute to research directed at the future of black colleges.

An NIE seminar coordinator told us that NIE had not yet established definite research objectives or agendas for this initiative and that the project was intended to help identify those factors. He believed that, for the project to succeed, it would have to result in not only future agendas, but also a heightened awareness of, and sensitivity to, black college issues within NIE.

CONCLUSIONS

NIE has initiated steps to increase minority and female participation in its programs. Although some of these efforts have started to show improvements, the effectiveness of most of these measures is going to depend largely on how much attention and funding NIE devotes to them.

We believe that NIE should devote more personnel resources to SADBUP to increase the effectiveness of its outreach, advocacy, and monitoring functions. Also, MWP is a constructive program that appears to be producing good outreach results. However, most black college support has come from this one program, and not as part of an NIE-wide effort.

We believe that the black college seminar and other NIE black college initiatives are increasing minority participation in NIE programs, and we agree that, if they are to succeed, they must be accompanied by an NIE-wide awareness and recognition of black college issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the NIE Director:

--Allocate additional resources to SADBUP so that its outreach, advocacy, and monitoring functions can be effectively implemented.

--Reemphasize NIE's support for its outreach efforts to increase minorities' and women's participation in NIE activities.

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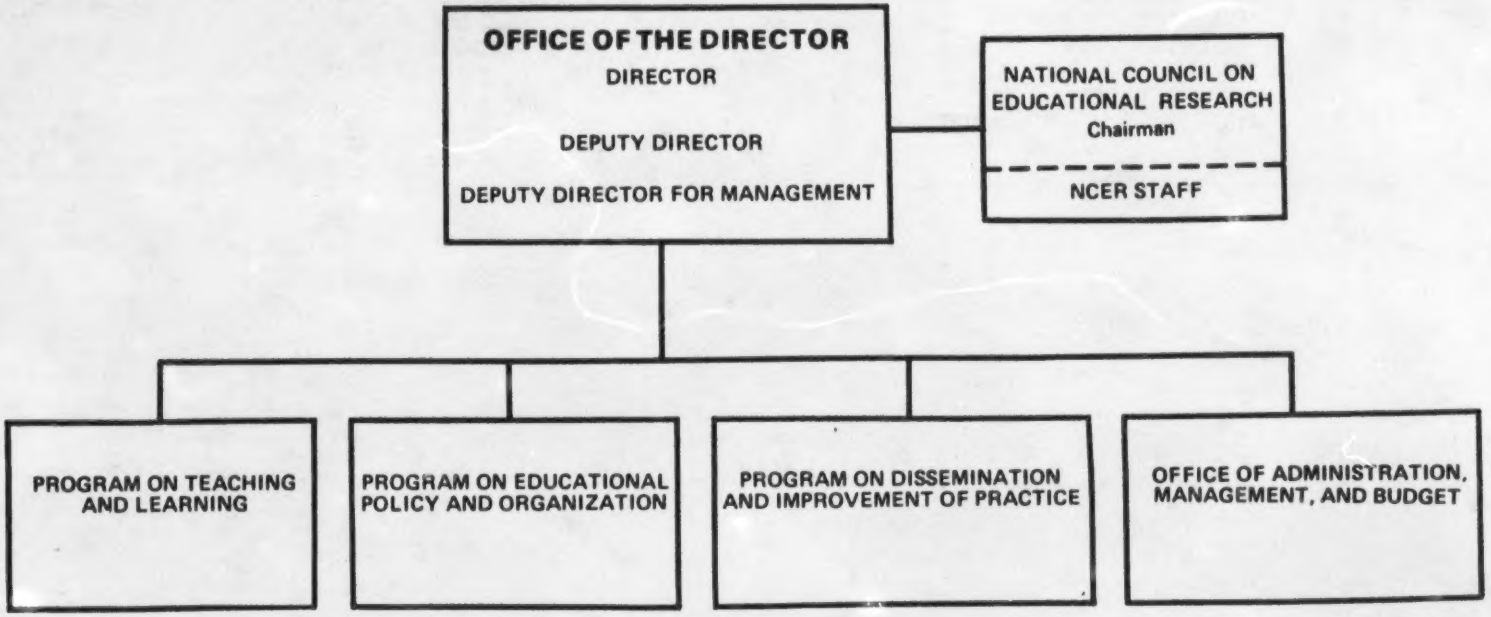

APPENDIX I

APPENDIX II

SUMMARY OF NIE EMPLOYMENT BY

SEX AND RACE CHARACTERISTICS

AS OF JANUARY 31, 1980

Grade/job description	Total NIE employees	Minorities		Women	
		Employees	Percent	Employees	Percent
Secretarial and clerical:					
GS-1-3	-	-	-	-	-
4	21	19	90.5	16	76.2
5	20	17	85.0	19	95.0
6	28	23	82.1	28	100.0
7	7	6	85.7	6	85.7
8	1	-	-	1	100.0
9	-	-	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-
	77	65	84.4	70	90.9
Professional and technical:					
GS- 5	2	1	50.0	-	-
6	2	2	100.0	2	100.0
7	16	13	81.3	14	87.5
8	5	3	60.0	4	80.0
9	11	8	72.7	8	72.7
10	1	1	100.0	1	100.0
11	13	4	30.8	11	84.6
12	22	10	45.5	14	63.6
13	25	3	12.0	10	40.0
14	32	4	12.5	8	25.0
15	23	1	4.3	5	21.7
16 and over	1	-	-	-	-
	153	50	32.7	77	50.3
Excepted positions and Senior Executive Service:					
Associates	46	12	26.1	23	50.0
Senior Associates	43	8	18.6	7	16.3
Executives	10	4	40.0	2	20.0
	99	24	24.2	32	32.3
Total	329	139	42.2	179	54.4

SUMMARY OF NIE PROPOSALS RECEIVED AND FUNDED FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS AND BLACK COLLEGES FOR FISCAL YEARS 1973-79

Fiscal year	Proposals for all institutions			Proposals for black colleges		
	Received	Funded	Percent funded	Received	Funded	Percent funded
1973	3,000	206	6.9	0	0	-
1974	780	95	12.2	9	0	-
1975	48	15	31.3	0	0	-
1976 (note a)	776	75	9.7	9	2	22.2
1977	929	95	10.2	7	0	-
1978	1,044	177	17.0	19	3	15.8
1979 (note b)	1,672	22	1.3	33	2	6.1
Total	8,249	685	8.3	77	7	9.1

a/Includes transition quarter.

b/Estimated by NIE.

APPENDIX III

(209581)

SUMMARY OF NIE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDING FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS AND BLACK COLLEGES FOR FISCAL YEARS 1977-80

Fiscal year	Total funding	Funds to all institutions		Funds to black colleges	
		Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
1977	$57,800,000	$19,100,000	33.0	$ 56,451	0.10
1978	76,200,000	29,300,000	38.5	192,734	.25
1979	80,200,000	30,500,000	38.0	630,682	.78
1980 (note a)	77,100,000	28,900,000	37.5	525,000	.68

a/Estimated.

36